

The Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is issuing a Broad Agency Announcement to solicit research proposals addressing development of Special Access Programs (SAP) and the use of “B” Days-at-Sea (DAS) in the Northeast Multispecies fishery as defined by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). Broader based conservation engineering projects are identified as a secondary priority. A website has been established to provide public access to the BAA package at <http://coopresearch.nero.noaa.gov>. Questions regarding proposal submission may be addressed via e-mail to Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov and shall reference this announcement. Only research proposals submitted by **March 12, 2004** will be considered. Offerors are advised that only Contracting Officers are legally authorized to commit the government to an award under this announcement. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are encouraged to apply. Questions on the objectives or preparation of research proposals should be addressed to Sarah Pike at (978) 281-9146. Questions related to contracting or cost issues should be directed to the Eastern Administrative Support Center, Attention: Michelle Morales at Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov.

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BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT (BAA EAC 04-0001)

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERS INITIATIVE (CRPI)

A. INTRODUCTION: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI) is seeking research proposals for projects involving cooperation between members of the fishing industry and scientists. This BAA is issued under the provisions of paragraph 6.102(d)(2) of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which provides for the competitive selection of basic and applied research proposals. Contracts awarded, based on responses to this BAA, are considered to be the result of full and open competition and in full compliance with the provisions of Public Law 98-396, "The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984." A web site has been established at <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov> to provide public access to the BAA package. A new BAA may be posted following expiration of this submittal period in support of any additional or continuing agency needs.

B. BACKGROUND: In accordance with emerging groundfish regulations, this request for research relates specifically to the development of Special Access Programs (SAP) and to the use of "B" Days-at-Sea (DAS) as proposed in Amendment 13 to the Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery Management Plan (FMP). This program may allow fishing in areas or during times when fully recovered fish stocks may be targeted by commercial fishing operations, while minimizing catch or mortality of groundfish stocks that are fully exploited or over-exploited. This may be accomplished by using selective fishing practices or developing protocols for targeting certain species. The development of these programs will require research on and development of new and innovative fishing gear or conservation engineering as well as study of regulatory, monitoring, enforcement, social, and economic factors that may influence the authorization of these programs. Research projects relating to SAPs and "B" DAS will be given priority. However, in the event that NMFS does not receive a sufficient number of proposals in response to these priorities, broader-based conservation engineering proposals as described below, may also be considered.

In early 2001, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (MCCS) was contracted by the NMFS CRPI program to conduct a series of workshops with the fishing and conservation communities in the Northeast Region. The objectives of these workshops were to: 1) discuss and document issues surrounding bycatch, discard, and conservation engineering technologies in New England; 2) bring fishermen's unique experience and expertise more directly into the science and management arena; 3) determine ways to develop research partnerships among fishery participants, marine scientists and fisheries managers; 4) encourage fishermen to participate in cooperative research and use their vessels as research platforms; 5) encourage creative thinking in the development of more selective and lower impacting fishing gears; and most importantly 6) most importantly, list local and regional research priorities aimed at mitigating bycatch and discard of New England groundfish. Some specific research topics discussed at these meetings included:

- Document biological and economic benefits of using larger mesh sizes of 6 ½ to 7 inches

or greater

- Document reaction and behavior of key species to various fishing gear and practices
- Address gear selectivity issues through gear modifications, changes in fishing practices and various other fishery input factors
- Implement studies to understand survivability of discarded fish or benthic organisms which come in contact with fishing gear
- Develop outreach and education programs coordinated with bycatch reduction research programs

Though these research topics were generally discussed at many of the MCCS port meetings, they do not represent the totality of topics discussed or potential cooperative conservation engineering research needs. You are encouraged to review the MCCS report which can be accessed on the Northeast Regional Office web page (<http://coopresearch.nero.noaa.gov>) or request a copy from Sarah Pike (978) 281-9146 or sarah.pike@noaa.gov.

C. OBJECTIVE:

(1) Technical Description: This BAA solicits research proposals for projects that relate to the development of SAPs and the use of “B” DAS in the Northeast Multispecies Fishery, and, as a secondary priority, broader-based conservation engineering proposals. Specific proposals may address conservation engineering, documenting and mitigating bycatch mortality and environmental impacts, and fishing gear selectivity affecting the Northeast Multispecies fishery as defined by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and/or discussed in the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (MCCS) report described above. Additionally, research proposals addressing regulatory, enforcement, monitoring, social and economic constraints or aspects of SAP development are encouraged. To encourage research ideas from fishermen as well as from scientists, NMFS is seeking proposals that state succinctly the mutually agreed upon objectives and benefits of projects. Proposals should identify resources that are available to the applicants and list other resources that are requested from the NMFS funding. Two categories of projects will be considered for funding:

Type 1:

Type 1 projects should address well-structured experiments with scientifically robust methods, which provide information on fishing gear selectivity, temporal and/or spatial availability of target species (recovered or underexploited stocks) versus non-target species (regulated groundfish that are currently in rebuilding or overexploited status). These studies will attempt to document the fishing protocols to be incorporated into regulatory requirements.

Type 2:

Type 2 projects emphasize the investigation of the regulatory, monitoring, enforcement, social and economic factors relevant to the development of a SAP program or the use of “B” DAS.

On an individual proposal basis, some projects may offset the total cost of the project by incorporating the sale of the catch into the proposal. Applicants must clearly explain their request for retention of the catch including use of days-at-sea (DAS) and accounting for the sale

of the catch. If research is to be conducted outside the fishing regulations, an Exempted Fishing Permit may be required. Anticipated experimental permits should be specified. In such situations, applicants are strongly urged to contact Michael Pentony of the Sustainable Fisheries Division at the NMFS Northeast Regional Office in advance of proposal submission. Additionally, applicants may access Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) application materials on the NMFS web pages (<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/600745.htm> or <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/EFP.htm>).

(2) Project Requirements: The objective of these projects is to encourage cooperative research between fisheries managers, scientists, and industry members. Specific activities may vary with each project, but all projects should incorporate the following elements where applicable:

- Administrative and/or other necessary support for the project, include the training and equipping of study personnel for onboard vessel safety where applicable.
- Adequate insurance coverage during research days at sea.
- Adequate communication with NMFS on project progress and accomplishment via interim progress reports (minimum of two); facilitation of project evaluation through site visits conducted by NMFS project monitors; and submission of a final report in accordance with a schedule negotiated with NMFS. Final reports will be required to pass a critical review and incorporate modifications according to review results. Additionally, final reports and all original or raw data shall be provided to NMFS. Access portals may be posted on the NMFS internet web site for public access.

D. PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS: Research proposals **must be received by close of business (4:30 pm) on Friday, March 12, 2004.** Submit proposals to: Sarah Pike, Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI), Northeast Regional Office, NMFS (NOAA Fisheries), One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Proposals will be reviewed by a technical review panel convened by NMFS. There will be separate evaluation criteria for each of the two proposal categories described above. Based on this review, NMFS may:

- (1) Invite the applicant to enter into a negotiation and contracting agreement with NMFS;
- (2) Recommend appropriate teaming arrangements and negotiate a broader based research project;
- (3) Fund the proposal as presented without modifications or negotiations; or
- (4) Choose not to fund the proposal.

Proposals shall include the following at a minimum, but are not limited to these elements. In terms of length, Type 1 and Type 2 project proposals are limited to 15 pages and 10 pages respectively, for items 1-8 below. Items 9 and 10 are not subject to this page limitation.

1. Project Summary
2. Project goals and objectives
3. Value of project to fishery conservation and management
4. Statement of work
 - a) Project design
 - b) Vessel, insurance and equipment needs
 - c) Personnel
 - i. personnel resources already available (identify persons involved in the development of the proposal)
 - ii. industry participation (tentative letters of commitment from fishermen, vessel owners, or other key industry participants)
5. List of equipment, facilities and infrastructure contributed by project participants or organizations.
6. Estimated timeline of project including: a) start date, b) milestones, and c) completion date including submission of deliverables. If the research is bound by seasonal availability of resources, this must be stated and reflected in the timeline.
7. Expected products and specific deliverables
8. Estimated budget to conduct the project
9. Contact information
10. Supporting documentation: Resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.

E. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA: Proposals will be reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of marine scientist, fishery managers, and representatives from the fishing industry. A score of 0 to 10 (10 being the highest achievable score) will be assigned to each factor listed below.

I. Research Value:

Type 1: To what degree does the proposal:

- improve the information available for groundfish management under the proposed Amendment 13?
- address specific groundfish gear selectivity on both recovered and recovering groundfish species?
- contribute to a long-term strategy to rebuild and sustain stocks?
- clearly state the time period and specific areas for the conduct of this research and other factors such as species, fisheries, i.e., gear sectors, time of year, and other important information to be addressed in the study?
- clearly describe how the project will achieve its stated objectives?
- offer practical solutions to management concerns relevant to the priorities described above?
- describe clearly the applicants facilities, equipment, and infrastructure proposed for this project listed?

Type 2: To what degree does the proposal:

- clearly articulate the specific research question or hypothesis to be studied as listed above in section C. (1): Type 2, i.e., regulatory, monitoring, enforcement, social and economic factors relevant to the development of SAP programs or the use of “B” DAS?
- state the specific research target population, research methods, study design, study instrument, measurement scales, and analytical procedures?
- offer practical applied research that may result in potential solutions that dovetail well with current management challenges?
- list all facilities, equipment, and infrastructure needed to accomplish the project?

II. Collaborative value for both types: To what degree does the proposal:

- promote collaboration between fishermen and scientists?
- involve a strong research partnership that is highly likely to succeed?
- involve a high degree of pro-active participation by fishermen in the design and conduct of research?
- address fishermen's interests or concerns?

F. QUALIFICATIONS: Any U.S. citizen may submit a research proposal under this BAA. Principal investigators who have previously been funded for research projects funded by NMFS must not be delinquent in progress or final reports.

Questions or comments regarding proposed projects described in this notice should be Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI), Office of State, Federal and Constituent directed to Sarah Pike, who can be reached at the following address/numbers: Sarah Pike, Programs, Northeast Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930, (978) 281-9146; FAX number (978) 281-9117.

E-mail inquiries may be made to: sarah.pike@noaa.gov.